



TESTIMONY OF
EVERSOURCE ENERGY
STEPHEN J. DRISCOLL
VICE PRESIDENT-OPERATION SERVICES
Before the Energy & Technology Committee
February 24, 2022

Re: **H.B. No. 5116, An Act Requiring The Creation Of Utility Company Treeplanting Funds.**

My name is Stephen J. Driscoll. I am the Vice President-Operation Services for Eversource Energy. I am offering Eversource's testimony in response to H.B. 5116 that has been raised for public hearing.

1. Background on Eversource.

Eversource transmits and delivers electricity to approximately 1.27 million customers in 149 municipalities in Connecticut; provides natural gas to approximately 246,000 customers in 74 towns in Connecticut; and our affiliate (Aquarion Water) provides service to approximately 198,000 customers in 51 towns in Connecticut. Eversource employs approximately 9,000 employees across three states. Approximately 50 percent of our employees are members of the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers, the Utility Workers Union of America or The United Steelworkers covered by collective bargaining agreements. In addition to the employees we directly employ, the infrastructure and other programs we administer generate hundreds of additional Connecticut-based jobs for contractors and subcontractors. Our projects also generate substantial tax revenues for Connecticut and its municipalities, and we are typically the top property tax payer in most of the towns we serve. For example, Eversource's Connecticut affiliates annually pay approximately \$400 million in municipal property taxes and Connecticut gross earnings taxes.¹

2. H.B. No. 5116, An Act Requiring The Creation Of Utility Company Treeplanting Funds.

Eversource has the following comments on H.B. 5116. This Bill directs Eversource and United Illuminating to pay \$500,000 and \$100,000, respectively, annually for tree planting in those municipalities where trees were trimmed or removed in the previous year. Eversource supports municipalities that elect to plant new, compatible tree species in locations that do not unreasonably interfere with utility infrastructure. Eversource also currently coordinates with municipalities, tree wardens and home owners under its "Plan Before You Plant" initiative to help ensure they select tree species and planting locations that are compatible with utility infrastructure.²

Vegetation management is a top priority for Eversource. We stand ready to work with all parties to improve our ongoing efforts to balance the need to preserve, protect and restore vegetation while simultaneously ensuring safety, reliability and minimizing storm damage.

¹ Connecticut property taxes paid and to be paid from July 2019 through June 2020 by Eversource affiliates: CL&P \$186,511,264; Yankee Gas \$33,581,456; and Aquarion Water Co. \$14,526,528. Also, gross earnings taxes paid in 2019 by Eversource affiliates: CL&P \$141,188,143; Yankee Gas \$21,939,623.

² See <https://www.eversource.com/content/ct-c/residential/about/reliability/vegetation-management/planting-guidance-for-property-owners>

As such, we have serious concerns regarding the Bill's proposal that an electric distribution company cannot recover the cost to implement this state-ordered initiative. Cost recovery is vital to ensuring a safe and reliable electric grid and denying recovery would severely jeopardizes those goals.

Eversource looks forward to working with this Committee and stakeholders to address and resolve these concerns.